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AN INTOLERABLE HONOUR
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BY

G. A. BIRMINGHAM

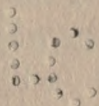


HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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AN INTOLERABLE HONOUR
AND
HYGIENIC AND SCIENTIFIC
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BY
G. A. BIRMINGHAM ✓

James Owen Hannay

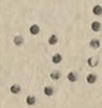


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AN INTOLERABLE HONOUR

COLONEL BERESFORD came down to breakfast one morning in September and found a letter from Lord Ablington beside his plate. He eyed it discontentedly while he poured out his coffee.

Lord Ablington was a nobleman with a high sense of the duties a great magnate ought to perform. It was his custom to invite Colonel Beresford twice every summer to dine and sleep at Ablington Castle. Colonel Beresford, too, had a high sense of duty. He always accepted one of the invitations; but — because the dinner parties bored him severely — he always declined the other, finding, year after year, greater difficulty in discovering any reasonable excuse. He suspected that the letter before him contained the second of his two invitations for the current year. His face wore a puzzled frown as he tore open the envelope.

“We are expecting a couple of young fellows,” wrote Lord Ablington, “friends of my son’s, to spend next week with us for the shooting. Danton, who is old Riversdale’s right hand man in the Foreign Office, is also coming and bringing his wife. It will be a pleasure to us if you will drive over on Tuesday, dine, and spend the night. I bought a few dozen of hock at poor Fillingham’s auction the other day — capital wine, I am told — and I should like to have your opinion on it. What a smash he came! Two hundred thousand they say, and he got through it in five years. I expect that old grocer of an uncle of his is writhing in his grave. By the way, I am thinking of recommending the appointment of a new J. P. in Ballintra. It would be a convenience to you to have someone to stand between you and that blackguard,

Glynn. I was thinking of your friend the doctor. Would he be a suitable man? In my opinion, he deserves a pat on the back for the admirable way he behaved at the Ballintra sports last summer. I understood at the time that it was he who persuaded the local band to play 'God Save the King.' If you think well of the idea, send me a note of his name. I have forgotten it, if I ever heard it. If Tuesday doesn't suit you, Wednesday will be equally convenient to us."

Colonel Beresford read the letter with great pleasure. He had a feeling of warm friendship for the doctor, and was so much gratified that he sat down immediately after breakfast and accepted Lord Abington's invitation. He expressed a pleasure he did not actually feel at the prospect of meeting Danton of the Foreign Office, and promised to give an unbiassed opinion on the merits of the unfortunate Fillingham's hock. He closed his letter with a strong recommendation of Dr. Whitty, whom he held up as a bright example of all a doctor should be. Then, since there was no reason to doubt that the appointment would be made, he walked down to the town to offer his congratulations at once.

He was fortunate enough to meet the doctor in the street.

"I've got a little surprise for you," he said, "a pleasant surprise, and I want to tell you at once how pleased I am."

"Outbreak of typhoid among your servants?" said the doctor.

"No. That wouldn't be a pleasant surprise!"

"It would to me," said the doctor. "You've no idea how agreeable an epidemic is to a doctor, when it occurs among people who have someone behind them to pay the bill. However, if it isn't that, it can't be helped. What is it?"

"I had a letter from Lord Ablington this morning. He —"

"He doesn't want the town band to learn 'Rule Britannia,' does he? For if he does he'll have to come over and teach them himself. I am not going to take on a job of that kind again."

"It's nothing of the sort," said the colonel. "The fact is Lord Ablington was so pleased about the 'God Save the King' performance last year that he wants to see you a J. P."

"If that's the only form his gratitude takes," said the doctor, "it's not much use to me. I wouldn't be a J. P. for two hundred a year paid quarterly straight from the Bank of Ireland."

"It's a high honour," said the colonel, who had old-fashioned ideas.

"Come, now, colonel, you can't seriously mean that. I know you're one yourself, and I think it uncommonly self-sacrificing of you to keep it up but — Hang it all! Look at Thady Glynn! You can't call it an honour to be mixed up with that fellow."

"Glynn's only a magistrate *ex officio*," said the colonel. "This is quite a different thing."

"Still," said the doctor, "I hardly fancy myself perched up in the Court House arguing with Thady as to whether it's the policemen or the riotous drunkard who ought to be fined. It's not good enough."

"I regard it as a public duty," said the colonel, "for every one of us —"

"I'm afraid I haven't got that sort of conscience," said the doctor. "I really couldn't be bothered. Why, think what it would mean. Every publican who wanted an occasional license would be worrying the life out of me. Every fellow whose heifer had been caught trespassing would send his wife to try and bribe me with a present of some old goose or other. I'd make a personal enemy of all the drunk-

ards about the place, and lots of them are patients of mine. I can't do it. If Lord Ablington is really so grateful, as you say, let him break his leg and send for me to set it. I should like that, but this plan of setting me on to go J. P.-ing about the country doesn't suit me at all."

"I've just written to him," said the colonel, "strongly recommending you, and I make it a personal matter, Whitty, that you accept the position. I'm getting an old man, and I'm beginning to find a good many things tell on me in a way they didn't a few years ago. It would be a great relief to me to feel there was somebody I could rely on — a man like yourself —"

"Don't say another word, colonel. When you put it that way I have no choice. It's all rot, of course, about your getting old. You're good for years and years of scrapping with Thady Glynn yet. Still, since you make a point of it, I won't refuse, if Lord Ablington really nominates me."

"Thanks," said the colonel. "And, really, you know, Whitty, it is an honour. I quite feel the force of all you say about Thady Glynn; still it's something to know that you are entrusted by your Sovereign with the administration of the law of the land."

"I'll try and look at it that way," said the doctor, "when I'm appointed. But I expect, myself, that Lord Ablington will think better of it."

"Not at all. The thing's as good as settled already. After he gets the letter I wrote him, he won't hesitate for an hour."

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The party at Castle Ablington was quite as dull as Colonel Beresford expected. The hock, indeed, turned out excellent and reflected great credit on the palate of the bankrupt Fillingham. But Lady Ablington, whom the colonel took in to dinner, growled

intolerably about her health. Danton, undoubtedly a valuable man in the Foreign Office, prosed abominably, and failed to see the point of anybody's jokes except his own. It was with a sense of relief the colonel escaped to bed at eleven o'clock. Next morning, after breakfast, Lord Ablington led him away to the library.

"I should like," he said, "to have a few words with you about that doctor. Whitty, isn't that his name?"

"You've sent his name up to the Lord Chancellor, I suppose?"

"No. The fact is — I don't, of course, attach any importance to communications of this sort." Lord Ablington unlocked a drawer in his writing table and drew out a letter which he handed to the colonel. "Still I'm bound to take every possible precaution. You'll quite understand, Beresford, that it wouldn't do. With the way our actions are criticised nowadays, we can't be too careful. But read that letter."

The colonel looked the sheet of paper up and down, and then read:

"Your Lordship,— Having heard that it is your intention to make a magistrate of Dr. Whitty, I beg to bring the following fact to your notice. Dr. Whitty is drunk in the evenings as often as he is sober, and, only last night, had to be helped home to his house by Michael Geraghty, the carpenter. If you have any doubt about the truth of this statement, ask Michael. He will bear out every word I say.— Your Lordship's humble servant, 'A Lover of Justice.' "

"An anonymous letter!" said the colonel.

"Quite so."

"And obviously written in a disguised hand."

"Plainly," said Lord Ablington. "And, of course, I attach no weight to it."

"I should hope not. The whole thing is an

abominable and malicious slander. I shouldn't wonder if Thady Glynn was at the bottom of it. He hates Whitty."

"Very likely. Still —"

"Whitty never was drunk in his life."

"Who's this man, Michael Geraghty? Is he a friend of Glynn's?"

"Not at all. On the contrary, he detests Glynn. Geraghty is a friend of the doctor's."

"A friend of the doctor's! Then why do you suppose the writer of this letter refers to him. If Geraghty had been an ally of the other man's, of Glynn's, I could understand it better."

"It is odd," said the colonel, "very odd, but I'm perfectly certain that Geraghty wouldn't stand in with anyone who was slandering the doctor."

"Suppose, then," said Lord Ablington, "that you ask this fellow, Geraghty, whether there's any truth in the story. There can't be any harm in doing that. You could do it quietly, you know."

"I shall ask him if you like," said the colonel, "but I know very well what he'll say."

"I shall be delighted to have the story flatly denied," said Lord Ablington, "and I'm sure it will be. In any ordinary matter, Beresford, I need scarcely say that your word would be enough for me, but, in a case like this, you will understand that I have to be extremely cautious."

Colonel Beresford went home perfectly satisfied that Lord Ablington's anonymous letter was the work of Thady Glynn. He summoned Michael Geraghty to Ballintra House and demanded from him a flat contradiction of the story of the doctor's drunkenness. To his surprise, Michael Geraghty seemed uneasy and inclined to evade the questions which were put to him.

"I wouldn't," he said, "like to be the man who'd say a word against the doctor."

"Tell me straight out at once," said the colonel. "Was Dr. Whitty so drunk the night before last that you had to help him home?"

"If he was itself," said Michael, "he wouldn't be the first."

"Don't shuffle. Give me a plain 'yes' or 'no.'"

"There's many a man," said Geraghty, "that might make a sup too much and nobody would ever think the worse of him after."

"Was Dr. Whitty drunk or was he not?" The colonel's temper was beginning to give way. "I may as well tell you that, if you say he was, I shan't believe you."

"He was." Michael Geraghty spoke without conviction.

"Was drunk?"

"As drunk as anyone you ever seen. Drunk so that he couldn't walk, nor couldn't talk sense, nor didn't know what you were saying to him, no more than if he was one of them heifers beyond in the field and you reading to it out of a book."

The indictment was definite and complete enough, but it seemed quite plain to Colonel Beresford that Geraghty was lying, lying clumsily and without real pleasure.

"You're a liar, Geraghty," said the colonel, "and you ought to be ashamed of yourself taking money from a blackguard like Thady Glynn and then slandering an innocent man."

"I haven't spoken a word to Thady Glynn this six months," said Michael sulkily, "and I wouldn't touch his money if he offered me the full of my hat of sovereigns."

"I always thought before," said the colonel, "that

you were, comparatively speaking, an honest man. I know now that you're a liar and a scoundrel."

"That's a hard word," said Michael, "and, may be, if you knew what you don't know, you wouldn't be so ready with it."

"You deserve it," said the colonel, "for slandering Dr. Whitty, who's always been a good friend to you."

"I would deserve it, if so be I'd done what you say. But it's what I wouldn't do, and nobody but yourself ever drew it down against me that I did."

"You have done it. Even supposing the doctor was drunk, which I don't for a moment believe, you're the last man that ought to publish it. You should have kept it to yourself."

"And so I would, if so be —"

"Don't talk that way to me. What's the good of saying you'd keep it a secret when you're joining in with Thady Glynn to publish it when it isn't a fact?"

"Colonel," said Michael Geraghty, "it's well known that you're a gentleman, and I'll trust to you that what I'm going to tell you will go no further, for if ever it got out that I told you, there'd be trouble for me, and, what's more, you'd be sorry yourself, terribly sorry, so you would. The doctor was not drunk, no more than yourself, this minute."

"I knew that," said the colonel. "Now tell me this. Wasn't it Thady Glynn that set you on to say he was?"

"I'll not say another word, good nor bad."

"You needn't. I know very well it couldn't be anyone else except Thady Glynn."

"I'll say no more. I'll neither say it is nor it isn't. Only I'll tell you this, and it's my last word. If Thady Glynn was to be hanged to-morrow for putting them stories out against the doctor, he'd die an innocent man."

Colonel Beresford wrote at once to Lord Abling-

ton a brief but emphatic letter. Without attempting a detailed report of his conversation with Michael Geraghty, he made it plain that the charge against Dr. Whitty was entirely baseless.

A few days later he received a visit from Dr. Whitty.

"Colonel," said the doctor, "has anything more been done about making me a J. P.?"

"I expect," said the colonel, "to hear from Lord Ablington to-day or to-morrow that he has forwarded your name to the Lord Chancellor."

"I'd be glad if you'd telegraph to him not to do it. I am perfectly ready to act if I am appointed, as I told you the other day, but—well, I don't want to say more than I need about a very unpleasant matter—but it will be better both for you and Lord Ablington if my name is withdrawn."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this. If I'm made a magistrate it'll be a public scandal and will bring disgrace upon the Petty Sessions Court of this town."

"If you're thinking of that ridiculous story about your being drunk, I may tell you at once that I don't believe a word of it, and I am sure Lord Ablington doesn't either. I never did believe it for an instant. The only thing that puzzles me about it is the queer way Michael Geraghty behaved."

"I'm not thinking of that story, but of something worse."

"Let's have it, whatever it is," said the colonel anxiously.

"I'd rather not speak about it, but the truth is that my tailor is taking proceedings against me in the County Court for a bill I owe him which I can't pay. It wouldn't look well, colonel—you must admit yourself it wouldn't look at all well for a newly-appointed magistrate to be—"

"My dear fellow," said the colonel heartily, "if that's all that's the matter it can easily be settled."

"No, it can't. The bill's close on twenty pounds, and I haven't as many pence."

Colonel Beresford crossed the room to his writing table and took his cheque book from a drawer.

"You must allow me, doctor. You really must. The sum is very trifling. We shall regard it as a loan, repayable at your convenience. I wish you'd told me sooner."

"I won't allow you, colonel," said the doctor. "I couldn't possibly. I may never be able to repay you. I — hang it all! I don't want the money."

Colonel Beresford blotted his cheque, folded it up, and pressed it into the doctor's hand.

"I'm glad to be able to do it," he said. "It's a pleasure to me. You're a man I've always liked. I've regarded you as a friend. I shall be seriously annoyed. I want no thanks. I won't hear another word from you. Go home at once and settle with that rascally tailor. And, let me tell you, I think all the better of you for coming here and telling me straightforwardly about the matter. It would have been awkward. I think Lord Ablington might have felt himself in an unpleasant position if this unfortunate business had come on in the County Court immediately after —. But we'll not talk about that. Good-bye, doctor. And don't let the thought of that twenty pounds come between you and your sleep. I don't care if I never see it again."

Still shaking the doctor's hand, he pushed him from the room.

Three days later Colonel Beresford received from Lord Ablington a bulky envelope. It contained a copy of the last issue of *The Connacht Mercury* and a short letter. The colonel read the letter first:

"I am, yours very sincerely,

Colonel Beresford took up the newspaper. There was no mistake about the passage which had aroused Lord Ablington's anger. It was completely framed in thick blue lines.

"George Whitty, Esq., M.D., Ballintra, £2 2s."

the active interest in the affairs of the League which his generous subscription shows us he feels."

Colonel Beresford stared at the paper in amazement. He found it, even with the printed statement before him, impossible to believe that Dr. Whitty had handed over the sum of two guineas to Thady Glynn. There must, he felt convinced, be some mistake about the announcement. He put the paper in his pocket and walked down to the doctor's house. He found Whitty filling a medicine bottle with some black drug in a corner of his surgery. An old woman, grumbling in an undertone, sat in a chair near the door."

"Is that you, colonel?" said the doctor cheerfully. "I was expecting you yesterday. Have you only just seen *The Connacht Mercury*? I'll be with you in a minute. Here, Mary, take that bottle home with you and rub it into your legs. Don't go drinking it. It'll very likely kill you, if you do. If you simply rub it in night and morning, the way I tell you, it'll do you no particular harm and the thought that you have it by you may be some comfort. Now, colonel."

"I suppose," said the colonel, "that this announcement is a mistake."

"Not at all. It's perfectly correct."

"Then it's some sort of joke, though I must confess I don't see the point."

"It's not a joke. It's serious earnest. I can tell you I didn't a bit like parting with that two guineas, and it went through me like a knife when I saw the grin on Thad's face as he pocketed the coin. I felt more like killing him then than I ever did before, and that's saying a good deal."

"Then you really gave it?"

"I did. You drove me to it."

"I?"

"Yes. You and Lord Ablington between you. First of all you refused to believe that I was an

habitual drunkard, although you had the best possible evidence for it."

"Was it likely that we'd believe an anonymous letter written by Thady Glynn?"

"Thady didn't write that letter. I wrote it myself, and if that miserable ass, Michael Geraghty, hadn't lost his head and gone back on every word I told him to say you would have believed it, and then there'd have been an end of this wretched J. P. business."

"Do you mean to say —?"

"Next," said Dr. Whitty, "instead of accepting my statement that a fraudulent bankrupt is not a proper man to make a magistrate of, you insisted on forcing a cheque for twenty pounds on me. It would have served you jolly well right if I had handed the whole of it over to Thady Glynn as a subscription to the League from you. But I didn't. I'm a merciful man, and I spared you. Here's your cheque, by the way; and the next time you want to pay a man's debts for him, make sure he owes them before you write cheques."

"But why on earth —?"

"After that," said Dr. Whitty, "there seemed to me only one possible thing to do. I knew that Lord Ablington would never appoint a man a magistrate who was mixed up with Thady Glynn and his lot, so I went round to the hotel and handed two guineas to Thady in the presence of a lot of witnesses. Then I went home and wrote a note to *The Connacht Mercury* man, asking him to stick the subscription into a prominent place in his next issue and, if possible, to write a special note about it. You read it, I suppose. He didn't do it at all badly."

"Why didn't you tell me you objected to being a magistrate?"

"I did tell you, but you wouldn't listen to me. You went on arguing about duty and responsibility

and things of that kind. You finally put it to me in a personal way that I couldn't refuse. Then, I promised I'd accept the honour—it was you called it an honour, I didn't—if Lord Ablington nominated me."

"He never will now."

"I sincerely hope not."

"I can't," said the colonel, after a short pause, "tell him all this story."

"You can if you like," said the doctor. "I don't mind a bit if you do. But I should say myself that he wouldn't believe a word of it if you swore it on a Bible."

"No," said Colonel Beresford, "he wouldn't. Hardly anybody would."

HYGIENIC AND SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS

IT was a hot day in June, and Dr. Whitty, not very busy at that season of the year, was sitting in his dining-room smoking. Michael Geraghty put his head in through the window:

"Are you there, doctor?"

"I am," said the doctor, "can't you see me?"

"It's what I have a letter for you. Jamesy Casey, the postboy, gave it to me, knowing I was coming up this way, seeing that it had 'immediate' written on the outside of it."

The doctor looked at the letter.

"It's from my Aunt Eliza," he said. "But what the dickens she can possibly have to say to me in a hurry is more than I can tell you, Michael. It's not once in six months she writes to me, and then it's only to get a prescription out of me that she might as well ask her own doctor for, only that she grudges the poor man what she'd have to pay him."

"Maybe it's took sick sudden she is this time," said Michael, "and wanting to get what would do her good in a hurry."

"She's never sick," said the doctor. "What medicine she uses is for her family. I never recollect her having anything the matter with her."

"If it isn't that," said Michael, "I don't know what it would be; but, sure, if you opened the letter you'd find out."

The suggestion was reasonable. Michael Geraghty, his curiosity aroused, remained with his head pushed through the window.

"DEAR GEORGIE—read the doctor—'(she's the only person in the world that ever calls me that)—'I write in great trouble to inform you that your cousin

Annie has contracted a matrimonial engagement—' Look here, Michael, this letter seems likely to be of a confidential kind. Perhaps you'd excuse my not reading the rest of it out loud."

Michael Geraghty, a man of tact and delicate feeling, retired at once. Dr. Whitty went on with the letter:

"—a matrimonial engagement of a most undesirable kind to a young man who has little or nothing to live on; and, so far as I can make out, never will. His name is against him, for one thing. How can you expect anybody called Augustus Jetty to make his way in the world? But, as your poor uncle said when he heard of it, we've got to make the best of it. Your cousin won't listen to advice either from her father or me. After a great deal of trouble, your poor uncle has got a situation of a sort for the young man, and we're relying on you to give him what help you can. He's employed on commission, they call it—I don't understand business very well—to travel for the Hygienic and Scientific Apparatus Company. As well as I can make out, he's got to try and sell some kind of surgical instruments, and it'll depend largely on the kind of support he gets from the doctors whether he makes anything or not. We are sending him down to Ballintra to make a start, and we're all relying on you to do the best you possibly can for him. Annie encloses a note from herself, but I dare say there's nothing in it except foolishness.

"Your affectionate aunt, ELIZA."

Annie's letter was much longer than her mother's. She wrote with considerable enthusiasm about the personal charm, moral superiority, intellectual force, and general desirableness of Augustus Jetty, and ended her letter with a formal threat:

"And now, George, if you don't do your best for Augustus and sell a lot of his things to all your

patients, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live, and you wouldn't like that. Father and mother are perfectly horrid, so we've nobody to help us except you."

Hard upon the letter Augustus himself arrived. His appearance was not attractive. He was undersized, pallid, very thin, and seemed to be rapidly growing bald. His eyes were narrow, and of a watery green colour. Dr. Whitty, who had a liking for his cousin Annie, received him hospitably, and offered him a cigar.

"No, thank you," said Augustus, "I never smoke. The fact is my heart is a little weak, and I fear the effects of tobacco, which, as you know, is a stimulant."

"I suppose, then, you wouldn't care for some whisky."

"No," said Augustus. "That's a stimulant, too; moreover, I have the strongest possible conscientious objection to the use of alcohol."

Dr. Whitty swallowed a mild oath, but, still recollecting Annie's pretty face, spoke politely to Augustus:

"Is there anything you would care for?"

"Thank you," said Augustus, "if you have such a thing as a banana in the house, I will take it gladly."

"I have not a banana, and what's more, I don't believe there's one in the town of Ballintra; so, if that's the only form of food you consume, I'm afraid you're likely to go hungry till you leave this."

Augustus sighed heavily.

"What about your surgical instruments?" said the doctor. "Have you brought any specimens with you? I could do very well with a new hypodermic syringe. I broke the needle of my old one last week, and the thing was pretty near worn out any way."

Augustus smiled in a feble, vacuous way. He pro-

duced from his pocket a list which he handed to Dr. Whitty:

"These are the articles our firm manufactures."

Dr. Whitty read the list through aloud:

"Portable Turkish Baths, 30s. 6d.; superior Quality, 'Oak,' 49s. 6d.

"Home Exercisers, 17s. 6d.; with Patent Springs and Pearl Grips, 25s.

"Electric Belts, 12s. 6d.; Full Strength of Current, 15s.

"Electric Indiarubber Flesh Massage Brushes, 7s. 6d. each.

"Photographic Cameras, Quarter-plate, Guaranteed, £2.10s. to £4."

"Now, how the devil," asked Dr. Whitty, "do you expect to sell any of those things in a place like this? There isn't a man, woman, or child in the district would take a present of the whole lot of them, or know what to do with them if you laid them out on the mat outside their bedroom doors."

"Annie told me," said Augustus feebly, "you'd be sure to be able to help me by recommending them to your patients."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I'll buy a camera myself at £3. I don't want it in the least, and am simply taking it out of affection for my cousin Annie."

Augustus Jetty seemed disappointed.

"Annie told me," he said, "that you'd be sure to give me a letter of recommendation to all your principal patients."

Dr. Whitty thought the matter over, and remembered the threat at the end of Annie's letter before replying:

"As a rule I don't do this kind of thing; but in this particular case I've no objection to your stick-

ing Thady Glynn with a portable Turkish bath, if you can. He's away from home to-day at a fair; so I'll give you a letter to Mrs. Glynn, telling her that a portable Turkish bath is the exact thing her husband really wants. If you have the nerve to rush her into buying one before Thady gets back, I'll take all the blame afterwards. I've had it in for Thady Glynn ever since the time he went for me about the band at the Sports, and I don't in the least mind helping you to swindle him out of thirty bob."

"What about the other things?" persisted Augustus. "Isn't there anybody who would buy a Home Exerciser? I'm in a position to offer you a commission of 10 per cent. on anything I sell through your recommendation."

"If you like to try the Colonel with a Home Exerciser you can. I'll give you his address. He's a well-off man who wouldn't feel the 17s. 6d. The 10 per cent., which would come to something with a halfpenny in it, as well as I can make out, you can keep to buy furniture when you set up house with Annie. While you're at it, you may as well call on Father Henaghan and see if he'd take an electric belt. He might fancy it, and I don't suppose it can do him any harm. In any case, I'll call round to-morrow and warn him not to use it. The only other people who could possibly buy anything are the Jacksons, and I wouldn't like to stick them for more than a massage brush. They have a large family."

Augustus made a careful list of the names and addresses and went out, promising to be back in time for dinner.

To the doctor's great surprise he returned absolutely jubilant; he had sold all four articles, delivered them to their purchasers, and received cash payment. He offered to make out the amount of Dr. Whitty's percentage, but seemed pleased when the whole sum

was made over to him as a wedding present. He sat down and watched the doctor eat his dinner. As there were no bananas or nuts, he himself ate nothing but two slices of very hard toast, which the house-keeper cooked under protest. Next morning he left Ballintra.

Dr. Whitty wrote a letter to his aunt:

"MY DEAR AUNT ELIZA,—I have seen Augustus, and feel extremely sorry for Annie! I have sold a specimen of each kind of hygienic and scientific apparatus to the principal inhabitants of this town, and am looking forward with anxiety to the kind of row there'll be to-morrow. Whatever happens, don't send Augustus here again, unless you want to get rid of him permanently. The people here are peaceful, and have a great regard for me; they will probaly shoot him at sight if he appears among them again. Give my love to Annie and tell her to try her young man with a steak and a bottle of porter. He wants fattening up, otherwise he seems all right, and ought to succeed in life, if persistence will help him. Send me a bit of wedding cake when the affair culminates and believe me your affectionate nephew,

"GEORGE WHITTY."

There was, as the doctor anticipated, a row, or rather four separate rows, next day. The trouble began quite early with a visit from Mrs. Thady Glynn:

"Doctor," she said, "himself is mighty queer this morning, and I'd be thankful to you if you'd give me some kind of a bottle that would do him good."

"I'll come down and have a look at him at once."

"It'd be better for you not. His temper is that riz, he might be for taking a knife to you. It's all along of that portable Turkish bath you sent down to him yesterday."

"If he's fit to take the knife to me," said the doc-

tor, "there can't be much the matter with him except temper."

"There is, then. It would make you cry, if so be it didn't make you laugh, to see the state it has him in. Nothing would do him this morning but to have a try at it. He sat in it for the best part of half an hour, and the perspiration was running down off his face before he was out. When he did get out, you'll hardly believe me, but it had him turned black from his chin to his feet, every inch of him barring his head, which didn't be in the inside of the bath at all."

"Nonsense," said Dr. Whitty, "it can't possibly have turned him black. Why should it? I expect the black was in him before he got in, and the thing hadn't time to do more than bring it to the surface. If he'd stayed where he was for another half-hour it would have all peeled off."

"He does say," continued Mrs. Glynn, "that you've had it in for him this long time, and that you said you'd turn him blue the way he angered you over the tune the band played the day of the sports."

"Look here, what did you fill the lamp with?"

"The lamp is it?"

"Yes. The lamp you put in under him."

"It did say on the paper," said Mrs. Glynn, "that it was methylated spirits had a right to be put in, but we'd run out of them on account of the way Lizzie does be taking them out of the shop for curling her hair, and I thought a drop of paraffine oil would do as well."

"That's it," said the doctor. "It's lamp-black that's the matter with the man. Go home and tell him to take an ordinary water bath with a jam-pot full of soft soap beside him. That'll make him all right at the end of ten minutes."

"It's what I told him myself. But where was the use of my talking? He said he'd be in dread of any

kind of a bath after what that one did to him. He said with the way you were treating him it would be hard to say what colour he'd come out next time, and he'd rather be black itself than either red or blue."

"All right," said the doctor, "if he won't take a bath he'll have to go about the way he is for a day or two. It'll rub off on his clothes by degrees. But, if I were you, I wouldn't give him clean sheets to sleep in till he's got rid of the worst of it."

"He did say that —"

"Hurry up, Mrs. Glynn, I see Father Henaghan's housekeeper and another woman waiting in the hall to speak to me."

"He did say that if you'd take it off him —"

"Well, I won't. I've more to do than spend my time scrubbing your husband with a nail-brush."

"It was the curse he meant," said Mrs. Glynn.

"Curse! I'll put a curse on you that you won't forget as long as you live, unless you get out of this pretty quick. I can't spend the day listening to your foolishness. I'm afraid of my life this minute of what Father Henaghan's housekeeper may have come to tell me, and I'm nearly sure the other woman is the Jacksons' servant."

Father Henaghan, it appeared, was in serious difficulties, if not in actual pain. The whole surface of that part of his body covered by the electric belt had come out in small white blisters. He could neither lie down, nor stand up to put on his clothes, on account of the pain given by the blisters when anything touched them. He wanted the doctor to go down to him. Dr. Whitty started at once, only waiting long enough to hear that Mrs. Jackson's youngest boy had developed an extraordinary series of red blotches on his back, and that the rector's left leg had been afflicted in a similar way. They had

both, he was told, used the electric india-rubber flesh massage brush he had recommended. It took him some time to soothe the physical sufferings and the mental irritation of the clergy.

When he got home he found another letter marked this time in red ink: "Immediate. In Great Haste."

"It's Aunt Eliza again," he muttered. "I hope to goodness the second girl hasn't got engaged to be married to another commercial traveller. If she has, she may starve before I sell any of his infernal appliances for him."

The news Aunt Eliza's letter contained was of quite a different kind:

"Your cousin Annie has changed her mind about Augustus Jetty, and I hope this will reach you in time to prevent your selling any of his appliances for him. She has found out he is a vegetarian, and has all sorts of queer notions about his own health. A girl he was engaged to before he met Annie has told her about him. Now, whether it's the thought of the things he eats or the feeling that he used to be after the other girl, I don't know; anyway, she says she'd be glad to get out of her engagement. The worst of it is that the other girl tells us he's a very hard young man to get rid of, and that, now he has Annie promised to him, it's likely he'll stick to her. Annie says that, if he does, she'll marry him if it breaks her heart rather than go back on her word, for she thinks he's really fond of her, though that's nonsense, of course. You may be able to help us. If he can't sell any of the appliances he may be willing to give up Annie. That's the only hope I see of getting out of the engagement; so, whatever happens, don't let him sell anything in Ballintra."

Dr. Whitty was still considering what answer he ought to give to this letter when Colonel Beresford appeared.

"I'd be very much obliged to you, doctor, if you could find it convenient to come up to my house and take away that home exerciser I bought from your friend yesterday."

"Surely to goodness," said the doctor, "you weren't such a fool as to go using a thing of the sort."

"Of course, I didn't use it. Is it likely, at my time of life, I'd go tangling myself up with a lot of pulleys and cords? No! What I did was to have it fixed up in the servants' hall. Then I told Jacobs, my man, that he and the cook could take it in turns to work the thing when they'd nothing particular to do. Jacobs has been looking flabby for a long time, and the cook is getting unwieldy with fat. I thought the home exerciser would do them both good."

"So it ought," said the doctor. "I should say myself it'd be the very thing for Jacobs."

"Well, it didn't seem to suit him. I gave him the papers of 'Directions for Use,' and told him to try it very gently at the first go-off, until he felt he'd got the hang of it properly. I don't know what the fool did, but, anyhow, there's been an accident: Jacobs has a black eye and won't be fit to appear in the dining-room for the next week. The cook's given notice."

"I don't see what can possibly have gone wrong," said the doctor, "unless you bought the twenty-five shilling sort, with the patent springs. You can't trust a patent spring."

"It was that one I did buy," said the colonel. "I thought, from the way you wrote, the man was a friend of yours, and I'd do the best I could for him."

"I suppose," said the doctor, "the patent spring exploded in some way."

"What the cook says is that, all of a sudden, there was a kind of noise: 'the like of what one of them

motor-cars would make when it was starting, and a clucking hen along with that' and that then 'the two handles of the thing came woffling off' and struck poor Jacobs in the eye, I suppose."

"And what do you want me to do? If Jacobs puts a lump of raw meat to his eye it's the only thing that can be done for it."

"I want you to come up and unscrew the thing off the wall and take it away. I'll get no peace till it's out of the house."

"Can't Jacobs do that?"

"Jacobs won't. He says he wouldn't touch the thing again for fifty pounds. And the cook won't, and she won't let the groom into the kitchen for fear he'd lose his life over it. She seems to have a strong personal regard for the groom. I asked the under-housemaid, who is the only sensible person left about the place, if she'd have a go at it. I lent her a screw-driver, and I believe the poor girl tried, but —"

"The cook didn't mind about her losing her life, I suppose?"

"She didn't seem to. But, anyhow, the girl failed to get it unscrewed."

"I expect she tried to twist the screws the wrong way," said the doctor. "I never met a woman in my life that could remember which way a screw turns."

"I dare say. At all events, there's nothing for it now but for you to come."

"Couldn't you do it yourself?"

"No. I daren't venture downstairs on account of the temper the cook's in. In fact, my plan was to wait here until you came back and brought the exerciser with you."

"Well, I can't go yet," said the doctor. "I'm frightfully busy at present. Father Henaghan's stomach is covered all over with white blisters, and the

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rector's leg has a red blotch upon it the size of a porter bottle, and to-morrow's Sunday. If I don't get those two reverend gentlemen straightened out in the course of the afternoon there won't be a religious service of any sort in the town to-morrow: and, on top of that, Thady Glynn has come out black from head to foot, and can't be induced to take a bath."

"If you're going to wash Thady Glynn," said the colonel, "until he's clean, I'm hardly likely to see you up at Ballintra House before Monday and goodness knows what state the servants will be in by that time."

"Well," said the doctor, "rather than see you absolutely stuck I'll go with you. But you'll have to wait a minute till I write a telegram."

It was to Aunt Eliza Dr. Whitty sent his message:

"Strongly recommend Annie to insure the life of Augustus Jetty, marry him, and then insist on his using all his own hygienic and scientific appliances. She'll be a widow in a week."

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